

## **Heat**

Tibetan: *drod* / pronounced: troe (*drod* = heat, warmth)

The first moment of the *heat* period of the Mahayana path of preparation and the first moment of the Mahayana path of preparation are equivalent.

Regarding the etymology of this level of the path of preparation, the meditative equipoise *directly* realizing emptiness (which is newly attained on the path of seeing) is described as a fire that burns or eliminates obstructions. Therefore, when Bodhisattvas reach the 'meditative stabilization, which is a union of calm abiding and special insight, conceptually realizing emptiness' they are getting closer to the direct realization of emptiness, which is why the heat level is a sign that practitioners are approaching the fire of the meditative equipoise of the path of seeing.

As mentioned above, the heat level of the Mahayana path of preparation is further categorized into:

1. Small heat
2. Middling heat
3. Great heat

This threefold category can be interpreted in two ways. Small, middling, and great may refer to practitioners of different mental faculties, with small heat referring to those of weak faculty, middling heat to those of middling faculty, and great heat to those of sharp faculty. Another possibility is that small, middling, and great refer to the time when they were generated, with small heat referring to the level generated in the beginning, middling heat to the level generated in the middle, and great heat referring to the level generated at the end.

## **Peak**

Tibetan: *rtse mo* / pronounced: tse mo (*rtse mo* = peak/summit/foremost)

Etymologically, this level of the path of preparation is called peak because it exceeds and is superior to the heat level.

It can be further categorized into:

1. Small peak
2. Middling peak
3. Great peak

Similar to the threefold division of the heat level, the division into small, middling, and great peak is either with regard to practitioners of different mental faculties, or with regard to the time when those three levels were generated.

## **Forbearance**

Tibetan: *bzod pa* / pronounced: zoe pa (*bzod pa* = forbearance/endurance/patience)

Regarding the etymology, during this level Bodhisattvas achieve a type of forbearance or endurance that is free from the fear of emptiness.

From the forbearance path of preparation onwards, Bodhisattvas cannot anymore be reborn in the lower realms (hell-realm, preta realm, and animal realm) through the force of afflictions and contaminated karma – even though they may still choose to be reborn in those realms in order to benefit sentient beings (once they reach the path of seeing).

Similar to the heat and peak levels, the forbearance level is further categorized into:

1. Small forbearance
2. Middling forbearance
3. Great forbearance

As before, this division may be with regard to practitioners of different mental faculties, or with regard to the time when those three levels were generated.

## **Supreme Dharma**

Tibetan: *chos mchog* (*chos* = Dharma/phenomenon, *mchog* = supreme/utmost/highest)

Etymologically, this level is called supreme Dharma because it is supreme among *ordinary* virtues. It is supreme among ordinary virtues since it is the highest level of the two ordinary paths. The two ordinary paths are the path of accumulation and the path of preparation.

The path of accumulation and the path of preparation are ordinary paths because Bodhisattvas who entered the Mahayana path from the outset do not *directly* realize emptiness on those two paths. The attainment of the mind that *directly* realizes emptiness (i.e. the attainment of the path of seeing) marks the first moment of the superior or Arya path and of becoming an Arya. From this point onwards, Bodhisattvas will no longer be reborn uncontrollably through the power of afflictions and contaminated karma, but deliberately through the power of compassion and prayer, in order to benefit sentient beings. Hence the former two paths are ordinary paths and the latter three Arya or superior paths.

Ordinary paths		Arya paths / Superior paths		
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Path of accumulation	Path of preparation	Path of seeing	Path of meditation	Path of no-more-learning

Similar to the first three levels, the supreme Dharma level is divided into:

1. Small supreme Dharma
2. Middling supreme Dharma
3. Great supreme Dharma

This division is also, either with regard to practitioners of different mental faculties, or with regard to the time when the three levels were generated.

The four levels of the path of preparation (heat, peak, forbearance, and supreme Dharma) are the same in conceptually realizing the emptiness of true existence and in having clear appearance of emptiness. Yet they are not the same regarding the length of time during which the practitioners have familiarized with emptiness. As a result, they also differ with regard to the type of misperception they are able to undermine or subdue.

There are four types of misperceptions, which refer to four types of conceptual consciousnesses that grasp at true existence.

These four are:

1. Conceptions which apprehend the true existence of ‘thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of experience’
2. Conceptions which apprehend the true existence of ‘completely pure phenomena being objects of experience’
3. Conceptions which apprehend the true existence of ‘perceivers of substantial existence being experiencers’
4. Conceptions which apprehend the true existence of ‘perceivers of imputed existence being experiencers’

The four types of conceptions are afflictive obstructions which Bodhisattvas eliminate while they progress through the first eight Bodhisattva bhumis/grounds.

Even though on the Mahayana path of preparation the ‘meditative stabilization, which is a union of calm abiding and special insight, conceptually realizing emptiness’ is unable to *eliminate* the four types of conceptions, it is able to *undermine* them. The undermining of those conceptions in turn enables their complete removal by the meditative equipoise on the path of seeing and the path of meditation. Furthermore, out of the four types of conceptions, the first is easier to undermine than the second, the second is easier to undermine than the third, and so forth.

Hence, the ‘meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness’ on the **heat** level of the path of preparation is able to undermine the first type of conceptions but not the second, third, and fourth. The ‘meditative stabilization, which is a union of calm abiding and special insight, conceptually realizing emptiness’ on the **peak** level is able to undermine the second type but not the third and fourth. The ‘meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness’ on the **forbearance** level is able to undermine the third type but not the fourth.

